1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

619
619
186

object of their allegiance, their joking disparagement of other tribes, and their indication of cultural variations in their own tribe as symbols of its singularity. A man of one tribe sees the people of another tribe as an undifferentiated group to whom he has an undifferentiated pattern of behaviour, while he sees himself as a member of a segment of his own tribe. Thus when a Leek man says that So-and-so is a Nac (Rengyan) he at once defines his relationship to him. Tribal sentiment rests as much on opposition to other tribes as on common name, common territory, corporate action in warfare, and the common lineage structure of a dominant clan.

How strong is tribal sentiment may be gathered from the fact that sometimes men who intend to leave the tribe of their birth to settle permanently in another tribe take with them some earth of their old country and drink it in a solution of water, slowly adding to each dose a greater amount of soil from their new country, thus gently breaking mystical ties with the old and building up mystical ties with the new. I was told that were a man to fail to do this he might die of *nueer*, the sanction that punishes breach of certain ritual obligations.

619
721

A tribe is the largest group the members of which consider it their duty to combine for raiding and for defensive action. The younger men of the tribe went, till recently, on joint expeditions against the Dinka and waged war against other Nuer tribes. Wars between tribes were less frequent than attacks on the Dinka, but there are many examples in recent Nuer history of border disputes among tribes and even of one tribe raiding another for cattle, and such fighting is traditional among the Nuer. The Leek tribe raided the Jikany and Jagei tribes, and a Leek tribesman told me, 'The cattle with which my father married were Gee (Jagei) cattle.' Poncet remarks: 'Les Elliab (Dok) se battent avec les Egnan (Nuong) du sud et les Reïan (Rengyan) du nord; les Ror de l'intérieur avec ces derniers et les Bior (Bor) de Gazal (Ghazal river). Toutes leurs querelles viennent des pâturages qu'ils se disputent, ce qui n'empêche pas qu'ils voyagent les uns chez les autres sans aucun danger, à moins cependant qu'on n'ait un parent à venger.'[1] In theory a tribe was regarded as a military unit, and if two sections of different tribes

[1] Op. cit., p. 39.

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

rated communities of the same tribe. The first may have more social contacts; the second be structurally nearer. But between Nuer tribes there is no common organization or central administration and hence no political unity that we can refer to as national. Nevertheless, adjacent tribes, and the Dinka who face them, form political systems, since the internal organization of each tribe can only be fully understood in terms of their mutual opposition, and their common opposition to the Dinka who border them.

Beyond these systems of direct political relations the whole Nuer people see themselves as a unique community and their culture as a unique culture. Opposition to their neighbours gives them a consciousness of kind and a strong sentiment of exclusiveness. A Nuer is known as such by his culture, which is very homogeneous, especially by his language, by the absence of his lower incisors, and, if he is a man, by six cuts on his brow. All Nuer live in a continuous stretch of country. There are no isolated sections. However, their feeling of community goes deeper than recognition of cultural identity. Between Nuer, wherever they hail from, and though they be strangers to one another, friendly relations are at once established when they meet outside their country, for a Nuer is never a foreigner to another as he is to a Dinka or a Shilluk. Their feeling of superiority and the contempt they show for all foreigners and their readiness to fight them are a common bond of communion, and their common tongue and values permit ready intercommunication.

Nuer are well aware of the different divisions of their country, even if they have never visited them, and they all look upon the area to the west of the Nile as their common homeland, to the occupants of which they still have distant kinship ties. People also journey to visit kinsmen in other tribes and often settle for long periods far from their homes, sometimes in different tribes, in which, if they stay there long enough, they become permanently incorporated. Constant social intercourse flows across the borders of adjacent tribes and unites their members, especially members of border communities, by many strands of kinship and affinity. If a man changes his tribe he can at once fit himself into the age-set system of the tribe of his adoption, and there is

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

does not see himself as a member of that same group in so far as he is a member of a segment of it which stands outside of and is opposed to other segments of it. Hence a man can be a member of a group and yet not a member of it. This is a fundamental principle of Nuer political structure. Thus a man is a member of his tribe in its relation to other tribes, but he is not a member of his tribe in the relation of his segment of it to other segments of the same kind. Likewise a man is a member of his tribal segment in its relation to other segments, but he is not a member of it in the relation of his village to other villages of the same segment. A characteristic of any political group is hence its invariable tendency towards fission and the opposition of its segments, and another characteristic is its tendency towards fusion with other groups of its own order in opposition to political segments larger than itself. Political values are thus always, structurally speaking, in conflict. One value attaches a man to his group and another to a segment of it in opposition to other segments of it, and the value which controls his action is a function of the social situation in which he finds himself. For a man sees himself as a member of a group only in opposition to other groups and he sees a member of another group as a member of a social unity however much it may be split into opposed segments.

Therefore the diagram presented on p. 114 illustrates political structure in a very crude and formal way. It cannot very easily be pictured diagrammatically, for political relations are relative and dynamic. They are best stated as tendencies to conform to certain values in certain situations, and the value is determined by the structural relationships of the persons who compose the situation. Thus whether and on which side a man fights in a dispute depends on the structural relationship of the persons engaged in it and of his own relationship to each party.

We need to refer to another important principle of Nuer political structure: the smaller the local group the stronger the sentiment uniting its members. Tribal sentiment is weaker than the sentiment of one of its segments and the sentiment of a segment is weaker than the sentiment of a village which is part of it. Logically this might be supposed to be the case, for if unity

[See category 11b — Analyst]

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

within a group is a function of its opposition to groups of the same kind it might be surmised that the sentiment of unity within a group must be stronger than the sentiment of unity within a larger group that contains it. But it is also evident that the smaller the group the more the contacts between its members, the more varied are these contacts, and the more they are co-operative. In a big group like the tribe contacts between its members are infrequent and corporate action is limited to occasional military excursions. In a small group like the village not only are there daily residential contacts, often of a co-operative nature, but the members are united by close agnatic, cognatic, and affinal ties which can be expressed in reciprocal action. These become fewer and more distant the wider the group, and the cohesion of a political group is undoubtedly dependent on the number and strength of ties of a non-political kind.

It must also be stated that political actualities are confused and conflicting. They are confused because they are not always, even in a political context, in accord with political values, though they tend to conform to them, and because social ties of a different kind operate in the same field, sometimes strengthening them and sometimes running counter to them. They are conflicting because the values that determine them are, owing to the relativity of political structure, themselves in conflict. Consistency of political actualities can only be seen when the dynamism and relativity of political structure are understood and the relation of political structure to other social systems is taken into consideration.

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

That every Nuer considers himself as good as his neighbour is evident in their every movement. They strut about like lords of the earth, which, indeed, they consider themselves to be. There is no master and no servant in their society, but only equals who regard themselves as God's noblest creation. Their respect for one another contrasts with their contempt for all other peoples. Among themselves even the suspicion of an order riles a man and he either does not carry it out or he carries it out in a casual and dilatory manner that is more insulting than a refusal. When a Nuer wants his fellows to do something he asks it as a favour to a kinsman, saying, 'Son of my mother, do so-and-so', or he includes himself in the command and says: 'Let us depart', 'Let the people return home', and so forth. In his daily relations with his fellows a man shows respect to his elders, to his 'fathers', and to certain persons of ritual status, within the circuit of its reference, so long as they do not infringe on his independence, but he will not submit to any authority which clashes with his own interests and he does not consider himself bound to obey any one. I was once discussing the Shilluk with a Nuer who had visited their country, and he remarked, 'They have one big chief, but we have not. This chief can send for a man and demand a cow or he can cut a man's throat. Whoever saw a Nuer do such a thing? What Nuer ever came when some one sent for him or paid any one a cow?'

I found Nuer pride an increasing source of amazement. It is as remarkable as their constant aloofness and reticence. I have already described how Nuer would interrupt my inquiries. I mention here three incidents typical of the cavalier way in which they treated me. On one occasion I asked the way to a certain place and was deliberately deceived. I returned in chagrin to camp and asked the people why they had told me the wrong way. One of them replied, 'You are a foreigner, why should we tell you the right way? Even if a Nuer who was a stranger asked us the way we should say to him, "You continue straight along th_t path", but we would not tell him that the path forked. Why should we tell him? But you are now a member of our camp and you are kind to our children, so we will tell you the right way in future.'

In this same camp, at the end of my stay, when I was sick and being removed by steamer, I asked the people to carry my tent and belongings to the river's edge. They refused, and my servant, a Nuer youth, and I had to do it ourselves. When I asked him why the people were churlish, he replied, 'You told them to carry your belongings to the river. That is why they refused. If you had asked them, saying, "My mother's sons, assist me", they would not have refused.'

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE NUER : CATTLE.

By E. E. Evans Pritchard.

II.

621 The chief characteristices of Nuer social life can be understood only when their pastoral activities are viewed in relation to the country in which they live. Social instutitions are to a large extent a function of this dynamic relationship between mode of livelihood and environment. I have said something about cattle and the esteem in which Nuer hold them. I will now say something about the country in which these cattle have to be maintained.

• 186 133 From the European's point of view Nuerland has no favourable qualities, unless its severity be counted such, for its endless marshes and wide savannah plains have an austere monotonous charm. It is throughout hard on man and beast, being for most of the year either a swamp or a parched and waterless tract. Trekking across the Nuer plains is a great weariness to body and spirit. But Nuer do not share this opinion. They think that they live in the finest country on earth, envying no people their heritage, and, it must be admitted, for herdsmen their country has many admirable features. It provides pasturage all the year round and absence of forest prevents the encroachment of tsetse. I have long since given up trying to convince Nuer that there is any country more suited for cattle husbandry than their own, an attempt more useless since a few Nuer have been taken to Khartoum, a place they consider to be the home of all white men. Having seen the desert scrub which surrounds Khartoum they are confirmed in their opinion that their own land is superior to ours.

•134 The grasses upon which depends the welfare of the herds depend, for existence in their turn, on soil and water. The soils of Nuerland are heavy clays which look very much alike to me and which are equally unpleasant to walk on in the dry season, when they are broken by the sun into deep cracks, and in the wet season when they form

11:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1945
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

587 588 768 woman ought, on the death of her husband, to go to live with one of his brothers, since she was married with the cattle of their kraal. This is not a re-marriage. The woman is still wife (*cek*) to the dead man but she lives with one of his brothers who takes the place of her husband, raising up seed to his name, and acting as foster-parent to the children and bread-winner to the family. Nuer never allow one to use the word "marry" (*kwen*) in this connection and I have sometimes provoked them to merriment by this mistake. They usually say *Ce cek deman lath dwil*, "He has provided his brother's wife with a hut". We may nevertheless speak of this form of cohabitation as leviritic marriage. Nuer regard it as [186] so desirable and logical a custom that I always had the utmost difficulty in explaining to them that in our country a widow may remarry. They wanted to know how this could be so when cattle had been paid and were scornful at the information that in Europe we do not pay bride-wealth.

587 588 593 Leviritic marriage is very different from ghost-marriage as will be seen when we consider the relations between the children and their genitor. It may be said whereas a ghost-marriage means that the vicarious husband actually marries the wife in the sense that he pays the cattle and performs the ritual of marriage, even though it is to the name of another, in leviritic marriage the legal husband has performed these actions and the brother merely enters as pro-husband a family already in being. The widow is always known as the wife of the dead man and the children clearly regard themselves as members of a legal family to which their pater's brother does not belong. The brother has less control over the widow than a man has over his partner in ghost-marriage and he may be opposed by the sons when they grow up.

Although this is not a marriage in the Nuer sense I use the expression "leviritic marriage" for want of a better and because I wish to emphasize the brother's legal position as pro-husband, for he has legal claim on the services of the widow in virtue of his kinship to the dead man. It was not the dead man alone who took her for wife but it was the brothers as a whole who married her with their cattle. If she refuses to live with him he can, in certain circumstances, divorce her, and if another man has relations with her while she is living with him he can sue the man for adultery. Leviritic marriage, therefore, like ghost-marriage must be conceived of as a variety of legal marriage, being a union between three persons, the dead husband, the pro-husband who is also the dead husband's brother, and the wife. It differs from a ghost-marriage in that the husband and wife at one time lived together in matrimony. A leviritic family, on the same principle, consists of the dead husband, the pro-husband who is also the dead husband's brother, the wife, and the children born of the wife. It generally differs from a ghost-family in that the children, or some of them, were begotten by the dead husband. Such a child is therefore a *ret*, or orphan, and not a *gat jooka*, or ghost-child. Here again the pro-husband can never be pater to children born of the wife, whether begotten by the dead man or by himself. The simple legal family is contained in the structure of the leviritic family as it is contained in the structure of the ghost family.

12:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1930-1931) 1933
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

619 ned from the Dinka who had brought him up they said "*achilo kang* (someone, the stranger) has gone. This phrase became corrupted into the word Jekaing, by which name the descendants of Kir are now known." This is an unlikely explanation, for one reason because the terminal phoneme in Jekany is *ny* and not *ng*, and for another reason, because *ji* is obviously a prefix meaning "people," as in JINACA, the people of Nac, or JIKUL, the people of Kul.[1] By analogy one may suppose that Jikany are the people of Kany, but it is very doubtful if Kany can be regarded as a proper name and equated with Kir, who was the founder of the dominant clan in this tribe and who, we might expect, would furnish the proper name after which the tribe would be called if they were called after a man. One may, nevertheless, I believe, ask a descendant of Kir "*Labi Kany?*" ("Are you a Kany?") in the same way as one may ask a descendant of Nac "*Labi Nac?*" ("Are you a Nac?"). Some people explain the term Jikany by saying that it is derived from a word meaning palm trees on account of a connection between palm trees and Kir who lived near them or who was found in a gourd on them or at their feet.

●186 There can be no doubt that tribesmen have an emotional feeling about their country and hence towards its other occupants. This sentiment arises from common action in warfare, common name, common traditions, common regulation of public life, common territory, and above all from the fact that in each tribe one clan is predominant and forms the iron girders of kinship around which the political structure of the tribe is built up. Except in occasional periods of solidarity, however, when the tribe acts together as a military unit, the sentiments E78 which bind its members together are extremely weak. Thus we find lengthy feuds going on between one section and another within the tribe itself.

619 621 (3) Nevertheless, machinery, even though it is cumbrous and not always very effective, exists by which feuds can be prevented or settled sooner or later when they take place between segments of the same tribe, whereas if a member of one tribe kills a member of another tribe there is no definite social machinery for controlling the situation which will arise as a result of the homicide. At the same time it is necessary to point out that the degree of control over retaliation for homicide varies

[1] In reading proofs I notice that I have written Jikany and Jekany equally but have not thought it worth while to alter. This is also the case with Jimac and Jemac.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

II

It is in the light of their feeling that man is dependent on God and helpless without his aid and that God, though a friend and present, is yet also remote that we are to interpret a word Nuer frequently use about themselves when speaking to or about God: *doar*. The meanings of this word given in Nuer–English dictionaries, 'idiot', 'stupid', 'fool', and 'weak-minded', do not adequately convey the sense of the word, especially when it is used to refer to man's relationship to God. Then it means rather 'simple' or 'foolish' or 'ignorant'—'idiot' in the sense the word used to have in the English language and which the word from which it is derived had in Greek. Nuer say that they are just ignorant people who do not understand the mysteries of life and death, and of God and the spirits, and why things happen as they do.

A favourite Nuer expression is '*yie wicda*', 'my head goes round' or 'I am bewildered'. They are at a loss because they are just foolish people who do not understand the why and the wherefore. In saying that they are simple or foolish or ignorant Nuer are not being modest in respect to other peoples, though I have often had the impression that they regard themselves as guileless compared with other peoples, especially compared with the Dinka, whom they regard as cleverer and more cunning than themselves, a difference dramatized in one of their myths. The story, which reminds us of that of Esau and Jacob, is cited by Nuer to explain why they have always raided the Dinka. Nuer and Dinka—the peoples are personified in the myth—were both sons of God, who had promised to give an old cow to Dinka and its young calf to Nuer. Dinka came by night to God's byre and deceived him by imitating Nuer's voice, and God gave him the calf. When God found that he had been deceived he charged Nuer to raid the herds of Dinka to the end of time. In other words, the Nuer may be robbers but the Dinka are thieves. Another story relates that God offered men the choice between cattle and rifles. Nuer and Dinka chose cattle and Arabs and Europeans chose rifles. Here both Nuer and Dinka are figured as simple compared to Arabs and Europeans. Nuer regard themselves as having manly virtues exceeding those of other peoples, but compared with them they are artless. However, when they use the word *doar* in a religious context they are speaking of themselves being foolish in